

LSE Research Online

Barry Buzan

Revisiting world society

**Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)**

Original citation: Buzan, Barry (2017) *Revisiting world society*. [International Politics](#). ISSN 1384-5748
DOI: [10.1057/s41311-017-0065-5](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-017-0065-5)

© 2017 [Springer](#)

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/83176/>
Available in LSE Research Online: July 2017

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's final accepted version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

Revisiting *World Society*

Barry Buzan

b.g.buzan@lse.ac.uk

For *International Politics* Special Issue

‘Conceptualizing World Society’

Barry Buzan received his PhD from the LSE. He is a Senior Fellow at LSE IDEAS, Emeritus Professor in the LSE Department of International Relations and a Fellow of the British Academy. His recent books include: *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (2004); *International Society and the Middle East* (2009, co-edited with Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez); *Contesting International Society in East Asia* (2014, co-edited with Yongjin Zhang); *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (2014); and *The Global Transformation* (2015, co-authored with George Lawson).

Address: Garden Flat, 17 Lambolle Road, London NW3 4HS, UK. Phone +4420 7433 1431.

Abstract:

This paper revisits Buzan’s (2004) book *From International to World Society*, in the light of both the seven papers in this special issue, and the English School literature on world society written since then. The paper focuses on two themes. First, it addresses the different meanings in the usage of ‘world society’. It distills these down into three forms: *normative*, *political* and *integrated* world society, and shows how these relate to, and extend, the earlier taxonomy of

interhuman, transnational and *interstate* domains. Second, it pushes forward on the question of how we might understand the concept of primary institutions in relations to world society. I show how some, but not all, of the primary institutions of interstate society have deep roots in world society. I then propose that the key primary institution for normative world society is *collective identity*, and for political world society, *advocacy*.

Keywords: English School, collective identity, interstate society, non-state actors, primary institutions, world society.

Introduction

In this concluding paper, I am not going to review the other contributions as such, but step back and consider their implications for how the still neglected topic of world society within the English School (ES) might be studied.¹ In doing this, I try to push forward the logic of the positions and definitions developed in Buzan's 2004 book, while taking into account some of the other discussions of world society published since then. Williams (2014: 127) describes that book (Buzan, 2004) as 'arguably providing the first effort at a comprehensive treatment' of world society, so it seems a reasonable place to start. The aim in what follows is twofold: first, to consider to what extent the arguments from 2004 still stand, or are in need of revision or abandonment in the light of subsequent discussion; and second, to try to extend the argument into areas where both the earlier work, and subsequent ES writings, have left things vague or unfinished.

In what follows I take up two issues: first, the several meanings of world society and how they might be clarified and related to each other; and second, the still largely unaddressed question of how to relate the concept of primary institutions to world society. I defend the distinctions among *interhuman*, *transnational* and *interstate* domains as still providing a useful way to think about world society, but I develop further how they relate to the various meanings of world society in play in the literature. Earlier work, raises the question of how one might think about primary institutions for world society, but did not attempt to answer it. Here I venture some possible answers, and explore their consequences.

Three Meanings of World Society

As Stivachtis and McKeil (this volume) note in their introduction, the ongoing vagueness and uncertainty in the meaning of world society is a problem for the ES. The ES's central concept of a society of states, although much more powerful and nuanced than 'international system', does not by itself seem adequate to encompass a more globalized world order. To capture the more complex processes of global governance, the ES needs to bring world society more into play, both by clarifying its meanings and by deepening and widening its accounts of how world society and the society of states interact. There are three main meanings of world society in play, both in these papers and in the wider literature. It is worth focusing on these in more detail, and in the process considering Stivachtis and McKeil's suggestion that perhaps making a terminological distinction among them might be useful. I will call them *normative world society*, *political world society*, and *integrated world society*. The first two of these provide most of the analytical leverage in connecting world society and interstate society. The third is mainly a label to describe the merger of world and interstate society. My approach here is mainly sociological/empirical: i.e. I am assuming that these things have empirical reality and display inside/outside relationalism. I am aware that one could also take a discursive approach to all this, but I leave that to others better equipped than me to do so.

Normative World Society

Normative world society reflects both Bull's 'great society of humankind', and Buzan's (2004: 118-59) idea of 'interhuman societies' mainly expressed in patterns of shared identity. As

Linsenmaier (this volume) argues, the ‘great society of humankind’ view of world society is profoundly normative. Williams (2014: 132) likewise observes how world society in ES usage has become linked to a solidarist ‘moral cosmopolitanism’. In this meaning, humankind is seen as comprised by individuals, and is distinct from states and the society of states. The main emphasis in ES usage is on the universal, cosmopolitan, normative foundations provided by using the interests and wellbeing of humankind as a whole, as a referent object against which to judge the society of states. This meaning contains no necessary or expected degree of any actual organization, or even general consciousness, of social structure. It can, indeed, take an entirely philosophical form, as in natural law and divine law, where the truth or not of the idea is the main concern.² It stands as a moral counterpoint to the interstate society, and because it has no actor quality in itself, is dependent on interstate society to provide some degree of order and justice, and to keep a balance between those two aims.

McKeil (this volume) is correct to argue that making an empirical reality of normative world society sets an extremely high bar. Yet only if normative world society actually came to have an empirical expression would it seriously challenge the society of states in the fundamental way implied by those who place cosmopolitanism in opposition to interstate society (for discussion, see Buzan, 2014: 89-96, 119-22). Such a development is highly unlikely in the foreseeable future, and in essence, normative world society in a global sense does not require any empirical expression other than the existence of humankind. Humankind can be used as an ethical and moral referent regardless of whether it has any organizational expression or even any universal self-consciousness. Pella (2013: 72-4) shows how mobilising the universal, cosmopolitan, sentiment was crucial for the anti-slavery movement in the 18th and 19th centuries. Most of

Clark's (2007) case studies of the influence of world society on the society of states are very much within this universal moral conception of world society. And Weinert (this volume), makes the same universal case about the common heritage of (hu)mankind. Weinert argues nicely that those who speak in the name of world society or universal values must be aiming to 'cognize and construct a world'.

Weinert's argument, and also Pella's (2013) and Navari's (this volume), all raise the question of whether the normative conception of world society requires that things done in its name necessarily be framed at the global level. Is this true, or just a consequence of the happenstance use of the word 'world'? The usage 'international' or 'interstate' society does not generate the question of 'universal or not?'. International/interstate society can be global, but it can also be regional or subglobal without creating any conceptual difficulty. Why should not the same be true of 'world society' regardless of the universal implications of 'world'? As usages such as 'the Islamic world' or 'the Chinese world order' suggest, 'worlds' have only to be reasonably self-contained and distinctive, not necessarily planetary in scale. Normative world society in its universal sense hangs on the identity of being human and the ethical standing attached to that. It might or might not be attached to a general consciousness of being a member of humankind, but it only requires that some people think in this way in order to mobilise this identity, as for example in the anti-slavery campaign (Clark, 2007: 37-60; Pella, 2013).

But human identities come in many forms that are less than universal, yet still have ethical standing attached to them. These forms necessarily have observable empirical reality in the form of collective identities that differentiate subsets of humankind from each other and from the

whole. They range from large scale identity formations such as religions and civilizations; to identities that are transnational, or even just within states. The key is that such identities are neither part of states, nor dependent on states for their reproduction. Nationalism sits at an awkward interface between world society and the society of states. Sometimes it might best be seen bringing world society into the framework of the society of states (nation-states). But it can also be seen as separate from and in tension with the society of states, as in the case of Pan-Arabism and Pan-Russianism on the macro-scale; and national identities either running across state borders (e.g. Korean, Bengali), or embedded within states on the micro-scale (e.g. Welsh, Ibo, Zulu, Tibetan). This kind of world society is mainly pluralist (Williams, 2005). Aside from the thin global consciousness of being humankind, its normative content is fragmented into numerous divided parts, from civilizations and religions, to nations, tribes and clans. Language groups are also an important marker. The normative quality of this fragmentation is expressed in pluralism, and the understanding that a diverse cultural legacy is history's gift to humankind, and is worth preserving for the same reasons that biological diversity is worth preserving.

In this view, the normative content of world society is fragmented and multiple, rather than singular and universal. Both Linsenmaier (this volume) with his case study of the interplay between the subglobal world society identity of 'European' and interstate society in Europe, and Stivachtis (this volume) with his study of the Philhellenic movement, are very much within this view. Within this understanding of world society, it is possible to subdivide 'the great society of humankind' into smaller, but still large, identities. In this way, a path can be found around McKeil's high universal hurdle. Civilizations or religions might well be empirically more realisable on subglobal scales where a strong sense of 'we' is a historical legacy. Stroikos's (this

volume) space international society, and Costa-Buranelli's (this volume) Central Asian identity, are also both operating within this fragmented conception of the non-state world society.

Normative world society can therefore come in parts as well as the whole. In either case, it is separate from the structures of the society of states. Because of this divisibility, when using the label of normative world society, it is necessary to specify whether one is referring to humankind as a whole or some subset thereof, as the moral referent. If humankind as a whole is the normative referent, then the value is likely to be cosmopolitanism and human rights, a pattern observable in much of the solidarist ES literature (Buzan, 2014: 123-33). If some subset of humankind is the referent object, then the values in play can come in infinite variety, from the *lebensraum* project of the Nazis for the German people, to the rights of smaller/weaker identity groups to preserve their cultures and languages against being overridden by bigger/stronger ones.

Political World Society

Like normative world society, political world society must be significantly separate from the society of states. It comprises all the non-state social structures visible within humankind as a whole that have both significantly autonomous actor quality, and the capacity and interest to engage with the society of states to influence its normative values and institutions.³ As both Clark (2007), and Pella (2013) emphasise, world society in this sense is about the political engagement of non-state actors with the society of states. This engagement is not necessarily or even usually in the form of an antagonistic zero-sum game. As Clark (2007: 1-35) rightly points out, world society and the society of states might both gain legitimacy and status from their

interaction. Indeed, their interaction needs to be understood, because without taking it into account, it is not possible to understand how the society of states works. So while normative world society is about identity structures within humankind, political world society is about a certain type of non-state actor.

On this basis, one can see that Pella's (2013) critique of Buzan's (2004) model of three domains (interhuman, transnational, interstate) is partly valid but partly wrong. Pella is correct to argue that in the real world it is impossible to separate the actions of individuals from those of non-state actors, a point also validated by Clark's (2007) case studies. But he is wrong to claim that this shows the practical inseparability of the interhuman and transnational domains. Interhuman society is defined by collective identities on various scales – it is identity that validates the idea of society in this domain. Individual humans engaging with interstate society have non-state actor-quality, and therefore count as part of political world society. The ES literature is replete with confusion and ambiguity on this point, and it is a very easy mistake to make. Williams (2014: 127), for example, talks about world society as adding non-state actors to interstate society, and offering 'a perspective focused on individual human beings and the idea of a global human community'. What he means is that it is individuals, rather than states, that form, or are the members of, world society, a classical sociological position that society is composed of individuals. This is different from individuals being actors. Buzan was certainly not clear enough on this point either.

The key to connecting normative and political world society does not lie along the line suggested by Pella, of merging individuals from interhuman society and non-state actors from transnational

society. Instead the link is that normative (interhuman) world society provides the ideational resources with which political (transnational) world society engages interstate society. As just argued, it can do this either on the basis of humankind as a whole or subsets of humankind. As Williams (2014:130-31) hints, non-state actors are, in effect, the intermediaries between normative world society and interstate society. Looking at the relationship amongst the three domains in this way opens up a range of interesting questions about what gets selected to be transmitted from world to interstate society, and why it gets selected? And what determines the outcomes: power? Cultural fit? Contingencies of timing? Stivachtis's (this volume) study of the Philhellenic movement is precisely about this linkage between an ideational resource in normative world society being mobilised by political actors. Costa-Buranelli (this volume) rightly reminds us that this relationship between world and interstate society is a two-way street. The identities and actors from world society can be foundational in providing the shared culture/identity underpinning interstate society. But interstate society can also repress world society, as in his Central Asia case, and also in the Arab World, where identities transcending states can be used to undermine the state-system by providing a higher level of authority to be captured by charismatic leaders.

Notwithstanding the criticism of his argument by Stivachtis and McKeil (this volume), by my argument Pella (2013: 74-7) is thus mainly right in his larger argument that ideology is 'the fundamental point of departure' for (political) world society. The actors in political world society draw on the ideational/ideological resources of normative world society to make their case. Those resources range from humankind as a whole, through religion and civilization, and explicitly political ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, racism and fascism; to various

national and subnational identities. They also include more functional ideas such as sport, that need to organize themselves within, but separately from, the society of states.

Integrated World Society

The first two meanings of world society are based on separating the interstate domain from both the interhuman/normative one, which serves as its normative reservoir, and the transnational/political one, which serves as the activist lobby intermediating between normative world society and interstate society. Integrated world society brings all three domains under one umbrella, creating an ideal-type for a prospective future. This meaning is an aggregating concept, representing the idea that the social structure of humankind can best be understood by linking all three domains together. It is what global governance, with its emphasis on the intermingling of states, intergovernmental organizations, non-state actors, and people, points towards as an eventual outcome of an ever-more densely integrated and interdependent human society on a global scale (Acharya, 2016; Karns & Mingst, 2010; Rosenau, 1992; Weiss, 2013; Zacher and Sutton, 1996).

Integrated world society is partly an abstract, ideal-type model, and partly a predictive teleology based on observed trends in global governance. It is also partly a normative approach, aiming to place human rights, and the rights of non-state organizations, perhaps particularly transnational corporations, on a par with state's rights, and so to roll back the idea that state sovereignty constitutes the over-riding foundation of order in the affairs of humankind. Buzan (2004: 203) characterises all this as follows:

A world society in my sense would be based on principles of functional differentiation amongst the various types of entities in play, and agreements about the rights and responsibilities of different types of unit in relation both to each other and to different types. States and firms, for example, would have to accept the historical evidence that neither performs efficiently when it tries to do the other's job, and that their respective legal rights and obligations need to be clearly demarcated. Each type of unit would be acknowledged by the others as holding legal and political status independently, not as a gift from either of the others. Individuals and firms would thus become subjects of international law in their own right.

In this conception, the present model of international society, which privileges states over all types of entity, is basically hierarchical. While sovereignty might make states legally equal to each other, it makes them superior to both people and non-state actors of all kinds (Buzan and Schouenborg, forthcoming). Integrated world society would abandon this privileging of states in favour of a more functional formulation in which the various kinds of actors in play – whether states, TNCs, non-state actors, or individuals – would each carry intrinsic rights and responsibilities, with none in a general superordinate position over the others. Integrated world society would also largely remove the tension between cosmopolitanism and interstate society by facilitating state-centric solidarism. An integrated world society would provide an easier path for the realisation of the normative pressures from 'the great society of humankind' to operate through interstate and indeed transnational society. World society in this sense would involve a revolutionary re-basing of the principles of legitimacy that currently differentiate normative/interhuman and political/transnational world society from interstate society.

In some ways, integrated world society is the least interesting, or perhaps the least analytically useful, of the three meanings of world society. It has no historical referents, and enthusiasm for global governance and global civil society notwithstanding, it does not look as if the basic hierarchy privileging the state is going to disappear any time soon. Integrated world society remain useful as an aspiration, and perhaps also as a framing for thinking about how uncivil society actors such as mafias and terrorists, might be handled within that kind of social structure. But the main practical interest of world society resides in its normative and political meanings. These have deep historical roots, and for the foreseeable future they define the main dynamics necessary to understand the global and local interplay of interstate and world society.

World Society and Institutions

Both Stivachtis and McKeil, and Navari (this volume) raise the question of how the concept of primary institutions relates to world society. Little advance has been made towards answering this question since Buzan (2004: 118-38) raised it, and neither did he include it in the active ES debates in his 2014 book. Davies (2017) has, however, recently made an interesting preliminary foray on the topic in which he argues that world society is in many ways analogous to the society of states in terms of its primary institutions. Otherwise, the ES has mainly confined itself to thinking about the structure of international society in state-centric terms. Clark (2007), and various discussions of human rights (Donnelly, 1998; Wheeler, 2000), have acknowledged that the institutional structure of the society of states can be, and sometimes is, shaped by upward pressure from world society. Yet to the extent that world society is analogous to interstate

society, we cannot fully define it unless we know what its institutions are. On that basis, a reasonable place to start thinking about this is the definitions of primary and secondary institutions given in Buzan (2014: 16-17):

Primary institutions are those talked about by the English School and reflect the second usage of ‘institution’ above. They are deep and relatively durable social practices in the sense of being evolved more than designed.⁴ These practices must not only be shared amongst the members of international society, but also be seen amongst them as legitimate behaviour. Primary institutions are thus about the shared identity of the members of international society. They are constitutive of both states and international society in that they define not only the basic character of states but also their patterns of legitimate behaviour in relation to each other, and the criteria for membership of international society. The classical ‘Westphalian’ set includes sovereignty, territoriality, the balance of power, war, diplomacy, international law and great power management, to which could be added nationalism, human equality and more recently and controversially, the market. But primary institutions can be found across history wherever states have formed an international society.

Secondary institutions are those talked about in regime theory and by liberal institutionalists, and relate to the organizational usage of the term. They are the products of a certain types of international society (most obviously liberal, but possibly other types as well), and are for the most part intergovernmental arrangements consciously designed by states to serve specific functional purposes. They include the United Nations, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the Nuclear Non-proliferation regime. Secondary institutions are a relatively recent invention, first appearing as part of industrial modernity in the later decades of the 19th century.

From this starting point, we can think along two lines: first, how might these definitions apply to identifying the institutional structure of world society in itself; and second, what is the interplay between the institutional structures of interstate and world society?

The Institutional Structure of World Society in Itself

We can start this process by looking at the first two meanings of world society established in the previous section: normative and political. Both of these meanings define world society in terms that make it necessarily distinct from interstate society and thus require that there be identifiable institutions of world society in itself. The definitions of these two meanings give strong pointers to where one should look for the relevant institutions. In the case of normative world society, institutions must relate to the patterns of human identity that range from humankind as a whole, to a variety of subglobal identity patterns ranging from large to small, but not dependent on states for their reproduction. Almost by definition there cannot be any organised actors (aka secondary institutions) within this meaning. In the case of political world society, the situation is reversed. This meaning focuses mainly on secondary institutions, raising the question of what primary institution(s) constitute these actors and determine their legitimate behaviour.⁵

Normative world society

Primary institutions in normative world society necessarily centre on the legitimacy, or not, of groups of human beings being referent objects in the sense that their particular shared identity has a right to be recognised and respected by others. Entities that take organised form and have

actor quality are by definition ruled out of normative world society, so whatever the primary institutions are, they are not about constituting such actors and defining their legitimate behaviour. They can only be about establishing the normative legitimacy of claims to group or collective identity. We might therefore identify the key primary institution of normative world society as *collective identity*.⁶

Looking through that lens, it is clear that some kinds of claim to collective identity already have established, even privileged, positions within interstate society. As already noted, the very large and widespread discussion of human rights generally starts from assumptions about a collective identity as the ‘great society of humankind’. Although the more political aspects of human rights remain hotly contested between authoritarian and democratic governments and societies, there is a consensual substrate around the survival and development interpretations of this concept. Humankind thus has established, and powerful, if still thin and partly contested, standing as a legitimate collective identity. A strong case can also be made that religion is widely accepted as a legitimate claim to collective identity, and that religious communities have a right to exist and to preserve and reproduce themselves. Such claims are made, and widely accepted, on behalf of Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and others, and there is a long tradition going back to the beginning of civilization of religion being legitimately differentiated from politics (even though also sometimes combined with it in the form of god-kings). The fact that there are endless disputes between and within religions, and that some states have campaigned against religion (the Soviet Union in its heyday, China against the Falun Gong), does not invalidate the general standing of religion as a legitimate claim to collective identity. Civilization is also used as a claim of collective identity, but perhaps has less standing than religion. Civilizational claims

somewhat overlap with religious ones, and in the case of countries such as China and India that claim to represent civilizations, also overlap with the interstate domain. Huntington's (1996) *Clash of Civilizations*, notoriously presented civilizations almost as actors (see Katzenstein, 2010 for a critique).

Interestingly, and provocatively, nationalism of course also fits as a form of collective identity. The ES long ago established nationalism as a primary institution of interstate society (Mayall, 1990; Buzan, 2014: 109-12, 157), associating it powerfully with the state level. This association gives nationalism perhaps the most privileged claim to recognition as a legitimate collective identity, making it a leading example of the transmission of ideas from normative world society into the primary institutions of interstate society. But as many have observed, nationalism as an identity is a poor fit with the pattern of territorial states. While there are only 200 or so states, there are several thousand nations. Some of these are buried within states, and some span across more than one state. Problems of irredentism and secession are legion, with some states playing to their multinational realities (e.g. Canada) and others trying to homogenize their citizens (e.g. France, China). Although states have certainly played a key role in creating and promoting nations as a form of political awareness, it is far from clear that either the creation or reproduction of national identity in a wider sense depends on states.

A wide variety of other collective identities are also out there within normative world society. Some of these are relatively uncontroversial, and easily support non-state actors within political world society. Think, for example, of collective identities linked to sport, professions, and various aspects of popular culture. Some are more controversial, such as revolutionary

movements or political dissidents of one sort or another. These might garner a mix of opposition and support regarding their legitimacy. And some will be seen as largely beyond the pale, with claims for legitimacy mostly opposed. Think of paedophiles, extreme religious cults, terrorists and suchlike.

If the idea of collective identity as the primary institution for normative world society is accepted, then an interesting empirical research agenda opens up to map the identity structure of normative world society and assess what kinds of identities get political recognition, what do not, and why.

Political world society

The most obvious institutions in political world society are the many and varied non-state actors – secondary institutions – that make it their business to intermediate between normative world society and interstate society through social movement activism. The interests of these actors range across a wide spectrum: peace, humanitarianism, human rights, religion, science, sport, commerce, labour rights, environmentalism, etc. The main activity of these non-state actors is, in one form or another, advocacy within interstate society, often through their participation in International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and conferences, and also by direct activism. They also provide services, either by themselves or as contractors to states or IGOs. There is no sharp division of labour here, and many non-state actors (think of religious and humanitarian groups) play as both lobbyists and service providers. Such activity can be tracked back to the late 18th and early 19th century. Anti-slavery organizations lobbied at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and peace activists were present at The Hague Conferences in the late 19th century.

Organized social movement activism rode on the back of the rise of nationalism and popular sovereignty during the 19th century, which legitimised public opinion as part of political discourse and negotiation. International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) proliferated alongside and in interaction with the rise of IGOs during the 19th and 20th centuries, rising from a few hundred before the First World War, to 25,000 today (Willetts, 1996; Mazower, 2012; Davies, 2013; Buzan and Lawson, 2015: 89-91, 93-5).

Under the definitions I am using here, the actors in a society must be constituted by, and have their legitimate behaviour shaped by, primary institutions. From the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to the Paris Conference on Climate Change in 2015, the participation of non-state actors in IGOs and conferences has had to be allowed by states. The obvious principle that explains such permission is the rise of organised advocacy as a legitimate expression of public opinion. This occurred first within the domestic politics of the more democratic modern states, and spread from there into multilateral diplomacy. *Advocacy* is therefore the main primary institution of political world society. This remains broadly true despite sharp differences on advocacy within states. Russia, China and other authoritarian states often make life difficult for non-state actors within their domestic jurisdictions, either banning them or classifying them as foreign agents. But this does not affect the now deeply institutionalised position of INGOs in world politics. Advocacy of course does not cover the service providing side of non-state actors, but that is largely covered by two institutions of interstate society – international law and the market – that authorise and legitimise a degree of independence to non-state actors.

The Interplay Between the Institutional Structures of International and World Society

The third meaning of world society (integrated) requires that one see the interhuman, transnational and interstate societies merged in some fairly profound way. It therefore moves away from the issue of what institutions world society might have in itself, and towards analysis of the integration and interplay of institutions across all three domains. One can see this in terms of a spectrum of gradations of interplay from minimal to maximal:

- Minimal interplay would be top-down only, where the institutions at the interstate level are dominant, and play down into world society.
- Low interplay would be the kind of two-way street described by Wheeler (2000), Clark (2007) and Pella (2013) in which world society sometimes influences the values of interstate society.
- Moderate interplay would be along the lines of global governance, where states and non-state actors play alongside each other in significant ways (Bukovansky et al., 2012), as in the Ebola crisis of 2014-15.
- Maximal interplay would be found in an integrated world society based on acknowledged and legitimate functional differentiation amongst different types of units.

Thinking along these lines suggests that in an integrated world society, the three domains would be bound together in three distinct ways:

- Primary institutions from the interstate domain penetrating into the transnational/political and interhuman/normative domains.
- Primary institutions from normative and political world society penetrating into the interstate domain. And

- Additional primary institutions needed to establish the rights and responsibilities of the different types of unit in relation to both other units of their own type, and other units of different types.

The first two of these are already fairly easy to see in the contemporary practices of global international society, where interplay among the domains can be found at minimal, low and moderate levels (see Davies 2017 for elaboration). The last as yet has no empirical reality because the interstate level remains the dominant one.

Interstate institutions in the transnational and interhuman domains

It is pretty obvious that some of the primary institutions of interstate society penetrate deeply into the transnational/political and interhuman/normative domains. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is nationalism, already discussed above, which resonates powerfully between normative world society and interstate society. This has been a two-way street, with states promoting nationalism downward, and world society promoting it upward. Nationalism, like football, has almost everywhere been deeply internalised and naturalised. Just as almost nobody remembers that football is an English game, almost nobody thinks of nationalism as a French idea. There are certainly disputes about which nationalism should define various peoples, but little dispute about the principle itself. Similar, if less dramatic, cases could be made about several other interstate institutions. The ideas of sovereignty and territoriality are pretty widely and deeply embedded in the public mind, and accepted as legitimising the organization of political life within states. So also are the values of human equality and development.

Increasingly environmental stewardship, despite many ongoing breaches in practice, is also accepted across the three domains (Falkner and Buzan, 2017). The right to war under specified conditions (e.g. self-defence), and not others (e.g. imperialism), also probably has wide popular support. Human rights and democracy are contested, and do not count as fully fledged institutions of global international society, but they nevertheless have considerable force in the interhuman and transnational domains in many populations. Most of these institutions are widely and popularly supported as matters of belief almost everywhere.

The market and international law probably have less resonance in the interhuman/normative world society, but are hugely important to the transnational/political world society because they legitimise and support the non-state organizational forms and activities within that domain. Whereas most of the institutions just discussed are held in place mainly by belief, the market almost certainly has a more mixed profile, being held in place partly by belief, partly by calculation, and partly by coercion, and with complex possibilities for the distribution of support and opposition between and among people and elites.

Some of the other institutions of interstate society are mainly of interest to state elites, and only occasionally resonate strongly into world society. This might be said of diplomacy, great power management, the balance of power, and war. There are times when peace movements and organizations mobilise around these institutions, for example in the peace movement of the interwar years that opposed secret diplomacy and ‘the merchants of death’, and the various anti-nuclear movements that accompanied the Cold War. But these more technical institutions generally don’t play strongly into the identity and organizational rights of world society.

Normative and political institutions in the interstate domain

Looking at the other side of the street, it is clear that there is also significant traffic going towards interstate society. Some collective identities, most obviously nationalism and religion, but also in significant ways humankind as a whole, have substantial legitimacy as the basis for making claims in the proceedings of interstate society. Think, for example, of the Kurds, the Tibetans and the Palestinians; or of Russia's claims concerning ethnic Russians living in neighbouring countries; or of organizations such as the Islamic Conference, the Arab League and the Nordic Union. Think also of the interstate machinery around human equality and human rights, which, since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are now embodied not only in the Charter of the UN (Clark 2007: 131-51), but also in many UN Conventions and Committees, and in many regional bodies. The UN has a Human Rights Council, and there is a body of international humanitarian law. Nationalism, indeed, now arguably stands alongside sovereignty and territoriality as one of the key primary institutions that defines the modern state.

The key primary institution from transnational/political world society, advocacy, has not been recognized under this label, but actual practice makes it abundantly clear that it is widely and deeply accepted in interstate society. For two centuries states have welcomed, or at least allowed, non-state actors to participate in many of their diplomatic activities. From the Congress of Vienna, through The Hague Conferences and the League of Nations, to the UN system and the many specialised IGOs and international conferences, many INGOs and firms are now deeply

and formally embedded in the processes of multilateral diplomacy. They are still there only by permission, making this fall well short of an integrated world society. But they are now firmly part of the process, and play an important role in both strengthening its legitimacy and providing expertise. It is on this basis that the term ‘global governance’ takes on real meaning. When one thinks, for example, about environmental stewardship, it embodies a mix of state and non-state entities and activities: not just the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), but also the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the 1972 Stockholm Conference, the Rio summit of 1992, conferences in Copenhagen (2009) and Paris (2015), Greenpeace, and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), among others.

Integrative institutions across the domains

There is no empirical referent for an integrated world society, so we enter the realm of speculation. At the moment, the claims of global governance enthusiasts notwithstanding, we are still in a world in which interstate society claims, and to a considerable degree exercises, political primacy in the world order. Non-state actors and identity groups can play in this game, but only by permission, and under rules largely set by states.

Recall the definition given above Buzan (2004: 203) of an integrated world society. It:

would be based on principles of functional differentiation amongst the various types of entities in play, and agreements about the rights and responsibilities of different types of unit in relation both to each other and to different types. States and firms, for example,

would have to accept the historical evidence that neither performs efficiently when it tries to do the other's job, and that their respective legal rights and obligations need to be clearly demarcated. Each type of unit would be acknowledged by the others as holding legal and political status independently, not as a gift from either of the others. Individuals and firms would thus become subjects of international law in their own right.

An integrated world society would therefore have to give standing to different types of actor – individuals, firms, INGOs – in their own right, and not just by the recognition of states. That would require a substantial redefinition of sovereignty, and a move towards some form of neomedieval order in which different types of units played alongside each other with none in the dominant position (Bull, 1977: 254-5). Almost certainly such an order would be strongly influenced by functional differentiation because it would have to be based on the allocation of different rights and responsibilities to the types of actors in play. There is not much point in trying to envisage the details of this here. What can be said is that whatever principles of differentiation and legitimacy were agreed amongst the different types of actor would almost certainly become primary institutions of an integrated world society.

Conclusions

I set out these two lines of argument in the full knowledge that they are preliminary, and likely to be hotly contested. Their main purpose is to provoke debate. World society is still an unclear and vague concept within ES theory. Yet it occupies an important place, and there is enough literature on it to tease out a range of implicit and explicit meanings, and to explore some of their consequences. By making these meanings and consequences clear I hope at least to encourage

some clarification of terminology in the debates, and to open up some interesting lines of research. Exposure in this way might also force some decisions about whether to carry on with the range of meanings shown here, or try to tighten up the concept in some other way. My own feeling about it at this point is that both differentiating usage among normative, political and integrative world society, and identifying the institutional structures beyond interstate society, clarify the debate and provide a good framing for sharpening up the place of world society in ES theory.

References

Acharya, A. (2016) *Why Govern: Rethinking Demand and Progress in Global Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bukovansky, M., Clark, I., Eckersley, R., Price, R., Reus-Smit, C., Wheeler, N.J. (2012) *Special Responsibilities: Global Problems and American Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buzan, B. (2004) *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buzan, B. (2014) *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations: The Societal Approach*. Cambridge: Polity.

Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. (2015) *The Global Transformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buzan, B. and Schouenborg, L. (forthcoming) *Global International Society: A New Framework for Analysis*.

Clark, I. (2007) *International Legitimacy and World Society*. Oxford University Press.

Davies, T. (2013) *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society*. London: Hurst.

Davies, T. (2017) 'Institutions of World Society: Parallels with the International Society of States', Paper presented to the ISA Convention, Baltimore.

Donnelly, J. (1998) Human rights: a new standard of civilization?. *International Affairs* 74(1): 1-23.

Falkner, R., and Buzan, B. (2017) *Environmental Stewardship as an Institution of International Society*. Paper presented at ISA Baltimore.

Huntington, S. P. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Karns, M. P. and Mingst, K. A. (2010) *International Organizations: the Politics and Processes of Global Governance*. Second edition. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Katzenstein, P. J. (ed.) (2010) *Civilizations in World Politics*. London: Routledge, 1-40.

Mayall, J. (1990) *Nationalism and International Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mazower, M. (2012) *Governing the World*. London: Allen Lane.

Pella, J. A. Jr. (2013) Thinking Outside International Society: A Discussion of the Possibilities for English School Conceptions of World Society. *Millennium* 42(1): 65-77.

- Rosenau, J. N. (1992) Governance, order and change in world politics. in J. N. Rosenau and E.-O. Czempiel (eds.) *Governance without government: order and change in world politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-29.
- Weiss, T. G. (2013) *Global Governance: Why? What? Whither?*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Wheeler, N. J. (2000) *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willetts, P. (ed.) (1996) *The Conscience of the World: The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System*. London: Hurst.
- Williams, J. (2005) Pluralism, Solidarism and the Emergence of World Society in English School Theory. *International Relations* 19(1): 19-38.
- Williams, J. (2014) The International Society – World Society Distinction. In C. Navari, and D. Green (eds.) (2014) *Guide to the English School in International Studies*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 127-42.
- Zacher, M. with Sutton B. A. (1996) *Governing Global Networks: International Regimes for transportation and Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹ I am grateful to Ian Clark, Thomas Linsenmaier, John Pella, Laust Schouenborg and John Williams, for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

² I am grateful to John Williams for this point.

³ Distinguishing non-state actors from states is not straightforward. Many non-state actors depend on the legal and political framework provided by states even if they are substantially autonomous as actors (e.g. Amnesty International). But some apparently non-state actors are closely tied to states by finance or ideology (e.g. peace groups in the Soviet Union).

⁴ Primary institutions originally evolve in some place and time. After that, they can be imposed upon, or adopted by, others, as was the case with sovereignty, nationalism

and territoriality during the expansion of Western international society to global scale. I am grateful to Mutsumi Hirano for this point.

⁵ Under this logic, states are also a type of secondary institution, but are differentiated from non-state actors because of their claim to political primacy over both people and other forms of organization. For discussion see Buzan (2004: 90-97, 118-28).

⁶ A precondition for this is that there has to be in place an epistemological infrastructure that makes normative theorising possible. For collective identity to work as a primary institution, it is essential that the validity and political salience of ethics and associated normative projects for achieving ethically valid change are accepted as valid modes of intellectual activity and bases for political engagement. I am grateful to John Williams for this point.